



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Mittelstadt** Chief Deputy

Respect for public and private property

Last week I was at Swan Park in Beaver Dam setting up the annual Rotary Lights Christmas display. I saw two teenagers pushing a tree branch through a chain-link fence which protects the electrical equipment. I couldn't understand why they were attempting to tamper with the electrical equipment, however, I knew there was no good reason for this activity. I asked them what they were doing. They were not able to provide a good explanation and immediately pulled the branch out of the fence. I explained that the park was there for everyone to use and I wanted them to enjoy their time in the park. I also told them that it is important to respect other people's property and not ruin it for others wanting to enjoy what the park has to offer.

I have seen people destroying or tampering with property throughout my career. I often wonder what the motivation for tampering or destroying property is, but rarely am I able to come up with a reasonable explanation. Perhaps it is because these individuals are lacking something constructive to do. I have had people I have arrested for damage to property tell me they do it because they get a rush. None of this makes sense and the damage caused is quite frequently very expensive. The bottom line is that these individuals typically just do not care.

Far too often, law enforcement is left with the task of having to educate our youth about damaging property. Unfortunately, there are generally repercussions that are required which perhaps could have been prevented with some education and supervision ahead of time. Not only could a citation be issued or an arrest made for criminal damage to property, but also there are monetary repercussions to our community, which many victims simply are not able to afford.

So what do we do about this problem? In my opinion, it is imperative that we as parents take time to talk with our children and explain the importance of respect for other people and their property. Sometimes it just boils down to teaching our youth the difference between right and wrong. In addition, it is incumbent on us as parents to provide proper supervision and discipline when appropriate. Knowing where our children are and whom they are with is not just a good idea, it's our responsibility.

The point of many of my letters to the community are generally to encourage being proactive. Part of the sheriff's office vision statement is to develop proactive solutions toward making Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit. That is exactly what I am suggesting in this month's column. Our communities need to be proactive in educating our youth about the impacts of not respecting others property.

I ask parents to take a moment and talk with your children discussing respect for other people and their property. A simple conversation between a parent and child in a respectful manner can go a long way toward ensuring nice things in our community don't get ruined. It can also help to ensure that our youth find constructive things to do to keep themselves busy while staying out of trouble.

In closing, on behalf of all men and women of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as we all work together toward making Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt